NOTES FROM THE 2014 MARCH WORKSHOP:

SARCOCHILUS.....**Neville Roper**
As rain forest plants, Sarcs like to be cool, in dappled shade, moist (not wet), have regular fresh potting mix, a humid atmosphere, be foliar fed and potted in Autumn or Spring.
Watering is difficult to gauge and Neville believes over watering kills more sarcs than anything else. Sarcs love rain water.

Potting Mix:
They enjoy a coarse potting mix and Neville's current mix is:
coarse bark, river pebbles, a small amount of Orchid Mate which will be left out when it runs out.
Sarcs love fresh mix. They could be re-potted as often as every 6 months.
Autumn is the best time to work with sarcs. Summer re-potting is to be avoided.
Pack or shake potting mix down well and try not to leave air pockets.

Mounts:
Parentage dictates which sarcs should be mounted. If they don't enjoy a pot, try a mount.
Mounts can be any of the following:
*slabs of cork or tree fern. Tree fern slabs should be sprayed with lime from time to time.
*live trees such as lemon trees, paper bark, woolly butt. (not gum)
*pieces of timber
*cut branches, though these will rot fairly quickly.

Accommodation:
Neville grows under 70% shadecloth and to keep his sarcs. cool he adds another layer from October to Easter.
He flowers his plants under cover.

Pots:
Neville uses squat pots as they have good drainage. Port pots are best.
Watch for roots blocking drainage holes.
Terracotta pots can be good.
Neville has a sample pot in clear plastic pots inside black plastic, just to check water needs.
He tends to overpot because of the coarse mix he uses.

Fertilisers:
Neville uses a 50/50 mix of Blood and Bone and Dolomite which he applies every 3 months using a shaker.....preferably just before rain. With his coarse mix he may even use it more often.
Coconut chips need calcium nitrate and occasional chemical fertilisers.
After potting, Neville uses seaweed extract.
Poultry pellets can be used .(Katek or Organic Life)
Sarcs. appreciate leaves being sprayed with a weak soluble fertiliser.....regularly, even in Winter.

Pest Control:
Sarcs are not really pest prone. May get scale or mealy bug and flowers may attract aphids.
Neem Oil or pest oil can be used and pellets for slugs and snails.

Disease:
Fungal infections may be of concern if drainage is poor.....check roots blocking drainage holes. Use Phosacid, Mancozeb, Ban Rot or Anti Rot.
If problems occur, break up the plant, dry out the roots for a few hours, treat with Anti Rot and re-pot in fresh mix.

CATTLEYA.....Dennis Diehm

The mini Cattleyas that Dennis produces are space efficient, will flower 2 or 3 times a year and the genera used in their breeding allows them to be grown cooler. Their colours are numerous and varied. They can be spotted, have splashes and can be scented.
Dennis' work with seedlings gives him many unexpected variations and results.

Position:

Position them high in a bush house or outdoors with shade. In cold and frosty areas they may need cover. They can grow as low as 4 to 8 degrees and as high as 30 to 35 degrees. They can be grown indoors in indirect sunlight.
In Dennis' area he removes the shade cloth from his roof from May to August.

Watering:

Hand watering helps with plant observation.
In Winter Dennis waters once every 7 to 8 days. In Summer he waters every second day or night. Night watering saves new growth rot.
In hot periods, plants and floor can be misted.

Fertilising:

Dennis fertilises every week with organic fertilisers or fish emulsion. However from February to April he changes to a chemical fertiliser with high nitrogen which is used at 1/2 strength and the product varied.

Pests and Diseases:

Cattleyas have the usual pests and diseases so treat as for other orchids and use a fungicide that works for you.
Deal with individual plants rather than treat the whole collection. A night walk with a torch will reveal nasties.
Good sound growing conditions with adequate air movement will ensure few problems occur.
Most bacterial infections are caused by over watering.
Virus only shows up in cattleya flowers.

Pots and Re-potting :

Clear phalaenopsis pots are used allowing Dennis to see air pockets and prod down the mix.
Most cattleya can be potted all year round except January to March. It should be done when the plant is crawling out of the pot. After re-potting they should be watered and kept in the shade for 2 weeks.

Potting Mix:

Dennis' current mix is:
60% bark either 6 - 9mm or 9 - 12 mm depending on plant size.
30% jumbo perlite
10% charcoal

AUSTRALIAN NATIVES.....Phil Grech

Potting

Phil believes the purpose of the mix is to hold the roots in place.
He uses bark and granite for all natives. The bark is washed to remove fines and 1/4 of his mix is decomposing granite.
Phil warns against teasing out roots when re-potting as damage can be caused.
He uses Steri-Prune on damaged plant parts when dividing.

Fertilisers:
Phil believes that most hobbyists do not understand chemical fertilisers so he uses an organic approach.
Organic Life is used when re-potting. The only chemical fertiliser he ever uses is Multicote 8 months . He would add about 8 granules to an average pot twice a year. He stressed not to over fertilise as this can be detrimental to the root system.
Phil alternates watering and fertilising with his special brew of **horse manure tea**.
The manure is put into a bag of fine fabric....10 kg. of manure into 100 litres of water. Then he aerates a 20 litre bucket of that mix and puts it into a 200 litre drum of water. This fertiliser is used with all his plants and natives love it.
Phil feels very strongly about the over use of chemicals. He is passionate about protecting our planet.
Water:
Phil contends that if the potting mix is open and the roots are healthy, a plant can not be over watered. He waters every 2nd day in summer and mists when hot.
Observation:
Phil is incredibly vigilant in checking his plants, so he is able to detect anything which might be amiss. He stressed observe, observe and observe!!!

Phil has found his method of growing successful over the years and his record of championships really says it all.

DOCKRILLIA.....Neville Roper.
If your dockrillia has fulignosa or black Pam in its breeding it can not be classed as an Australian Native as these are P.N.G. plants.
Neville maintains that Dockrillia will grow themselves. They don't need a lot of care.
They are very slow growing particularly in the early years and will take a long time to flower.
Neville's grow on a south wall, facing north and also on a west wall, facing east.
Possible Mounts:
Tree fern holds water longer and comes as slabs or hollowed out pots. Lime can be used on dead tree ferns to treat them before use.
Cork will sour, so needs lime treatment.
Cork rafts can be constructed from champagne corks.
Mesh cylinders of pebbles and fine bark will work.
Mesh port pots with pebbles and bark on a hanger can be used.
Terracotta pots hanging.....heavy but good.
Paper bark branches.....will rot out however.
Gutter guard pouches inside a bowl with coco peat and perlite are another possibility.

Neville uses a piece of shade cloth stapled over the roots of the plant to fix it, or ties it with fishing line.
If an established plant has a rhizome with roots growing, it can be removed and planted up.
Neville waters his dockrillia with other orchids and dunks them in fertiliser from time to time.
They should be sprayed with lime water twice a year.....1gram per litre.
They are susceptible to scale and dendrobium beetle, so take measures to eliminate these.
If they out grow their mount, just add the existing mount to a bigger one.

CYMBIDIUMS.....David Wain.

From modest beginnings in his backyard, to a small lab. for flasks and a large energy efficient orchid house, David Wain is fulfilling a passion which began as a young lad visiting the Pollock's nursery in Ulladulla whilst on holiday.
David mainly supplies potted cymbidiums for the public market though he still enjoys showing and breeding.
He out sources the cloning and deflasks plants into individual pots.

Growing Medium:

Everything is grown in composted pine bark with just the size varying to match plant size.

Housing:

The orchid house roof is plastic and the walls roll up and down to give temperature and air flow control. The orchid house is situated on top of a hill which gives great air flow.
50% shade is used on the roof.
All plants are on the floor in saucers on gravel.

Fertilising:

Plants are liquid fed every watering with overhead sprinklers from the end of flowering until the buds begin to open.
David makes his own fertilisers
Green and Glossy Mix:
400g potassium dihydrogen phosphate
600g urea
into 1000 litres water.
This greens up plants but doesn't contain trace elements.
So David has two other tanks for fertilising.....to allow calcium to be absorbed separately.
Tank 1:
ammonium nitrate
magnesium sulphate
potassium dihydrogen phosphate
borax and other trace elements
Tank 2:
calcium nitrate
potassium nitrate
iron chelate

Light:

Leaves should be light green. Too dark....too much shade. Yellowing.....too much light.

Flowering:

Plants are well spaced allowing air flow to cool them thus creating temperature drop which helps initiate flowering.
David uses yo yos.

Pests and Disease:

Agri-Fos through the sprinklers is used to prevent fungal attacks.
A once a year spray with Acramite and Eco Oil keeps mite and scale under control.
Some of the larger nuisances such as rats, mice and rabbits are dealt with in various ways. Tomcat has proved a useful rodent bait, whilst a tenacious fox terrier helps to flush out the very destructive rabbits.

Breeding:
In making his own crosses, there are a number of outcomes David is hoping to achieve.
He breeds to:
achieve a rounded shape
eliminate rolling lips
keep foliage shorter for better flower display
increase number of flowers per spike
accentuate flower spacing
accelerate growth of the plant
speed up flowering times
have multi-spiking plants
have clean, crisp colours.

PHALAENOPSIS.....Dennis Diehm
Whilst Dennis is a commercial grower with special housing, heating and cooling, he pointed out that phalaenopsis can be grown inside a home or even on verandahs.
Position:
Indirect sunlight is needed, Grow on the shady side of the house in Summer with more sun during Autumn and Winter.
Light:
More light will cause spiking to be later but may result in more spikes.
Spikes will occur earlier if plants are given 100% shade for a period of time.
Watering:
Watering and light go together.....more light equals more water.
In Summer, Dennis waters up to 3 times a week with misting in between.
In Winter he waters once a week with misting 3 times weekly.
Dennis recommends misting only in the mornings.
Feeding:
Dennis uses a good balanced fertiliser with 18%nitrogen.
During March he uses a fertiliser with 16.6%potassium + magnesium to induce flowering.
(A drop in temperature will also encourage spiking.)
He feeds once a week.
Potting Mix:
If sphagnum moss is used it needs to almost dry out between watering or fertilising sessions.
Dennis now uses a bark / perlite / peat mix with the peat slightly dampened.
When to re-pot:
There are no hard and fast rules.
Re-pot if the plant is too big, if the roots are dead or every 2 or 3 years.
Flowering and re-flowering:
To encourage re-flowering, cut the old spike above the 1st or 2nd node from the bottom.
If you cut higher the new spike may cause the plant to be un-balanced.
For a first flowering seedling, remove the spike near the base of the plant.
Yellow phallies can have their spikes left on and they should continue flowering all year round.
If re-flowering a harlequin and the temperature is too high, the flower will be different from the original. It can occur from one bud to the next on a spike if the temperature changes dramatically between buds opening.

Problems:
Leaves may get sunburnt if in direct sun. This presents as a brown patch.
Snails and slugs love phallies. Bait for these pests.
Mealy bug can be a problem. Use something heavy duty at 10 day intervals and then use Eco Oil. This will take care of red spider mites too. Watch for scale also.
Cell structure break down may occur in extreme cold. Remove the leaf.
Botrytis shows as little brown spots on flowers and is a result of humidity plus low overnight temperatures. Increase the night temperature or lower the daytime temperature.
Brown rot will turn the leaf to mush. Use sulphur powder or cinnamon on infected patches.
Crown Rot will occur if water is left in the centre of the plant. Remove the centre and treat with powdered Mancozeb.
Dennis pumps a pool chlorine through his watering system for rot problems.
Phalaenopsis used to be virus free, but now White Phalaenopsis Ring Spot Virus can occur. It presents as deep circular welts on the leaves and plants should be destroyed.
Bud Burst is caused by sudden temperature changes, lack of humidity and the presence of methane gas.

Dennis has been experimenting with colour, big lips and is now exploring peloric flowering phallies.
In the future he will be working with miniatures.

Notes taken by Sue Carroll.